

6/2/66

BOSTON REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

REPORT AND DECISION ON APPLICATION FOR  
APPROVAL OF THE CHRISTIAN SCIENCE CHURCH 121A PROJECT

A. The Hearing. A public hearing was held at 1 p.m. on June 2, 1966, in Room 350, 73 Tremont Street, Boston, Massachusetts, by the Boston Redevelopment Authority (hereinafter called the "Authority") on an Application (hereinafter called the "Application") of Roy Garrett Watson et al., Trustees of Church Realty Trust (hereinafter called the "Applicants"), dated May 10, 1966, for authorization and approval of a project under Chapter 121A of the Massachusetts General Laws (Ter. Ed.), as amended, and Chapter 652 of the Acts of 1960, as amended, due notice of said hearing having been given previously by publication on May 16 and May 23, 1966, in the CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR, THE BOSTON GLOBE, THE RECORD AMERICAN, and THE BOSTON HERALD TRAVELER, daily newspapers of general circulation published in Boston, and mailing postage prepaid, in accordance with Rule 8 of the BOSTON REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY RULES AND REGULATIONS FOR SECURING APPROVAL OF PROJECTS IN BOSTON UNDER CHAPTER 121A OF THE GENERAL LAWS AS AMENDED and in accordance with the provisions of Section 13 of said Chapter 652. The following members of the Authority were present throughout the hearing:

Rt. Rev. Msgr. Francis J. Lally  
Stephen E. McCloskey  
James G. Colbert



6/2/66

-2-

B. The Project. The Project consists of the demolition of the existing structures and the planning, construction, landscaping, maintenance and management by the Applicants of the structures and improvements listed hereinbelow, on a tract of land on Huntington Avenue, Boston, as described on a plan attached to the Application as Exhibit B-1, entitled "Boundary and Street Change Survey", dated May 12, 1966, by I. M. Pei & Associates, Architects. Those premises are hereinafter referred to as the "Project Area". The following structures and facilities are proposed to be constructed thereon:

1. An office tower of not less than twenty-four (24) stories, containing a minimum of 140,000 square feet of office space. The entire tower will be used by The First Church of Christ, Scientist (hereinafter called the "Church"), and its affiliated organizations and activities for office purposes as the administrative center of its international activities, replacing other space now occupied for such purposes outside the Project Area, and providing additional space for such use.
2. A low-lying, triangular-shaped building to contain approximately 120,000 gross square feet for a Christian Science Sunday School, Reading Room, meeting rooms and other Church-related activities, and a small commercial area proposed for a branch bank or other commercial use.
3. An underground parking garage with a capacity of 624 cars, to provide space for employees of the Church and Church-related



6/2/66

-3-

activities and patrons of Symphony and Horticultural Halls.

4. A large, landscaped plaza, with a rectangular reflecting pool and with a fountain at one end. The plaza would be open to the public under reasonable rules and regulations established by the Church.

C. Relocation. The Project Area has had a substantial population, until recently providing homes for 188 residential tenants. However, only twenty remained in the Project Area as of the date of the Application (May 10, 1966), and only four of those had not by that date selected and obtained assurances of a place to relocate. At the date of the hearing, only two or three tenants remained.

D. Authority Action. Before making the findings and determinations hereinbelow set forth and approving the Application, the Authority has considered the Application itself, all documents, plans and exhibits filed with it or referred to in it, the statements of the Applicants' architect, Araldo Cossutta of I. M. Pei & Associates, Architects, made at the May 12, 1966, meeting of the Authority, the model of the project displayed at that meeting and at the hearing, the memorandum of the Development Administrator to the Authority dated May 25, 1966, respecting "Christian Science Church--121A Application", the oral evidence presented at the hearing, the exhibits offered in evidence at the hearing and the arguments and statements made at the hearing. The members of the Authority are also personally familiar with the Project Area and surrounding neighborhood.



6/2/66

-4-

Accordingly, the Authority hereby makes the following findings and determinations:

There are forty-two buildings in the Project Area. All but four were built prior to 1900. Ninety percent of the buildings are deficient and 52 percent are structurally substandard. No buildings have been built in the Project Area for over thirty years, although twenty-five have been demolished since 1954. Among the remaining buildings there is marked overcrowding, faulty arrangement and design, and inadequacy of light, air and open space.

The Project Area is part of a larger area previously found to be a substandard and decadent area under Chapter 121 of the General Laws (Ter. Ed.), as amended, by the Authority on November 24, 1965, in connection with its approval of the Fenway Urban Renewal Plan. That finding was concurred in by the Boston City Council in its resolution of December 20, 1965, approving the Fenway Urban Renewal Plan. The Mayor of the City of Boston also approved the Fenway Urban Renewal Plan on December 23, 1965.

The Project Area is a decadent area within the definition contained in Section 1 of said Chapter 121A, in that it is an area which is detrimental to safety, health, morals, welfare and sound growth of the Boston community because of the existence of buildings which are out of repair, physically deteriorated, obsolete, and in need of major maintenance or repair, and because buildings have been torn down and not replaced and under existing conditions it is improbable that the buildings



6/2/66

-5-

will be replaced, and because of inadequate light, air and open space; and the Project Area is a substandard area within the definition contained in said Section 1, in that it is an area wherein dwellings predominate which, by reason of dilapidation, overcrowding, faulty arrangement and design, lack of ventilation and light, and a combination of these factors are detrimental to safety, health, morals, welfare and sound growth of the Boston community.

The Project as described in the Application constitutes a "project" within the meaning of said Chapter 121A since it provides for the construction in a decadent or substandard area of decent, safe and sanitary institutional and commercial buildings and such appurtenant and incidental facilities as shall be in the public interest, and the operation and maintenance of such buildings and facilities after construction.

There are conditions which warrant the carrying out of the proposed project. The purposes of said Chapter 121A and said Chapter 652 will be met. It will eliminate conditions of blight and deterioration, and will involve the construction of a substantial group of handsome structures and improvements, providing the Church with needed office space and room for various other activities, providing off-street parking in an area of the City where it is badly needed, and providing a plaza on a major street which will enhance the appearance of not only the Project Area but also the surrounding neighborhood. It will result in the complete upgrading and rebuilding of an area in which there has been no new construction for over thirty (30) years. It will provide substantial



6/2/66

-6-

financial return to the City in that, although the Church and the City are still negotiating the amount to be paid in addition to the excise, the Church has publicly expressed its willingness to pay an excise together with such additional amounts as will exceed the current (i. e., 1965) tax yield from the Project Area by approximately 20 percent.

The cost of the Project has been correctly estimated.

The Project will be practicable. All land in the Project Area except public streets is already owned by the Applicants and the Church. The entire cost of the construction of the buildings and improvements and of the street acquisitions is proposed to be paid by the Church with its own funds. The Authority believes that the Church is well able financially to carry out that proposal.

The Project does not conflict with the master plan of the City of Boston. The Project provides for buildings, improvements and activities of types contemplated for the Project Area by the 1965-1975 General Plan for the City of Boston, approved by the Authority on March 11, 1965. It also conforms to the Fenway Urban Renewal Plan.

The Project will not be in any way detrimental to the best interests of the public or the City or to the public safety or convenience or be inconsistent with the most suitable development of the City. The Project will constitute a public use and benefit.

The Project Area does not include land within any location approved by the state Department of Public Works for the extension of the Massachusetts Turnpike into the City of Boston.



6/2/66

-7-

The minimum standards for financing, construction, maintenance and management of the Project, and including design review procedures, all as set forth in Exhibit D, filed with and attached to the Application, are hereby adopted and imposed as rules and regulations applicable to this Project for the same period as the Project is subject to the provisions of said Chapter 121A and said Chapter 652.

It is the Authority's understanding that the building shown as abutting Horticultural Hall on the plans and drawings submitted as exhibits with the Application is merely a schematic representation of the general size and shape of a possible future addition to Horticultural Hall, which the Horticultural Hall Society and the Christian Science Church are jointly considering for later detailed planning and construction. Accordingly, and notwithstanding any other terms, provisions or statements in this Report, the Authority hereby requires that the Applicants, prior to the construction of such a building, submit to the Authority for its review and approval the plans for such building in accordance with the design review procedure set forth in said Exhibit D, just as would be necessary in the case of any building or improvement not shown at all on said plans and drawings.

The carrying out of the Project will involve the destruction of buildings occupied in whole or in part as dwellings; and there is a feasible method for the temporary relocation of families displaced from the Project Area and there are, or are being provided, in other areas



6/2/66

-8-

not generally less desirable in regard to public utilities and commercial facilities and at rents or prices within the financial means of the families displaced from the Project Area, decent, safe and sanitary dwellings equal in number to the number of, and available to, such displaced families and reasonably accessible to their places of employment.

The carrying out of the Project will require the erection, maintenance and use of a garage within 500 feet of one or more buildings occupied in whole or in part as a public or private school, having more than fifty pupils, or as a public or private hospital having more than twenty-five patients, or as a church, and the Authority hereby determines that such parking facilities will not be substantially detrimental to any such school, hospital or church; and an application may be granted and a permit issued for the erection, maintenance and use of such parking facilities, anything in Chapter 316 of the Acts of 1922 to the contrary notwithstanding. The Authority also finds that the granting of such application and the issuance of such permit is reasonably necessary in order to carry out the Project.

The Project does not involve the construction of units which constitute a single building of a type which could be considered as separate buildings under the Boston Building Code and zoning law for the purposes of Chapter 138 of the General Laws.

Exhibit C to the Application sets forth the one permission requested for the Project to deviate from zoning, building, health and



6/2/66

-9-

fire laws, codes, ordinances and regulations in effect in Boston. For the reasons set forth in the Application and supporting documents, in the evidence presented at the hearings, and in the materials referred to in this Report, the Authority hereby finds that the permission requested in said Exhibit C is reasonably necessary for the carrying out of the Project and may be granted without substantially derogating from the intent and purposes of the applicable laws, codes, ordinances and regulations. That permission is hereby granted.

The Authority finds that the construction and use of the project, with the benefit of the aforementioned permission, will not be in contravention of any zoning, subdivision, health or building ordinances or bylaws, or rules and regulations of the City of Boston, or of any Boston municipal board, in effect in the location of the proposed project.

The Authority hereby finds that the Application and the Project conform to and comply with each and every applicable requirement of Chapter 121A of the General Laws (Ter. Ed.), as amended, Chapter 652 of the Acts of 1960, as amended, and the applicable Rules and Regulations of the Authority; and the Authority, for these reasons and for the reasons set forth in the Application and supporting documents, and the evidence presented at the hearing, and in this Report, and in the materials referred to in this Report, hereby approves the Application and Project, as requested in the Application.



